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THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

INDUCTION AND THE PROBLEM OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD [1]

THE theory that the external world is unknown, or is unknowable, has been maintained for a large variety of reasons by many epistemologists. Since G. E. Moore's "The Refutation of Idealism," however, it has been the fashion to maintain the thesis—held in one form or another by many of the most eminent contemporary thinkers, among them B. Russell, H. Reichenbach, C. I. Lewis, and D. C. Williams—that our knowledge of the external world is inferable from the data of sense in accordance with the logic of induction or, more generally, of probability. This generic formulation is common property of the thinkers mentioned; but at three important points they differ radically in the special form of the thesis which each advances: first, as to the cognitive content of the premise of the inference—the nature of the data of sense; second, as to the content of the conclusion of the inference—the nature of the external world; and third, as to the inference itself (from premise to conclusion, or from data to hypothesis)—the nature of probability.

In this paper, I propose to examine that special form of the thesis which is advocated by Professor D. C. Williams, in the attempt to show that the very logic of induction assumed by him renders it logically impossible to validate his hypothesis of the external world.[2] In the first section, the paper will state very briefly the two major theories of the external world, and then the two major theories of probability. In the second section, it will expound in somewhat more detail Professor Williams's theory of probability, then his theory of induction, and then his theory of the external world. In the final section, it will attempt to reveal a basic and indispensable feature of his logic of induction which, when the inductive argument for the existence of the external world is made explicit, renders that argument unavoidably circular and therefore invalid.

[1] I owe special thanks to Professor H. Wang for reading an early draft of this paper, and for suggesting clarification and expansion of a number of obscure points in the argument.

[2] This paper is part of a general thesis that all such probabilistic theories of our knowledge of the external world are in principle invalid.

I

Generically, the term "external world" is synonymous with the description "anything whose existence is independent of the existence or operation of the mind or consciousness." It entails, if it is not equivalent to, a denial of Berkeley's *esse est percipi*. This generic concept of the external world, however, is compatible with two distinct, mutually incompatible forms of it. In the first, which constitutes what may without prejudice be called the "empiricistic," the external world is defined more specifically in terms drawn from sense: the external world, independent though it is of sensing or perceiving, is in principle sensible or perceivable. In the second form, which constitutes the "metaphysical" theory, the external world is defined more specifically in terms essentially *other* than those of sense: it is not only unexperienced but unexperienceable; not only existentially independent of perceiving but also existentially distinct from the perceivable.

These two major theories of the external world, sharing—as they do in the formulations of the writers mentioned—the inferential theory of our knowledge of the external world, are associated with the two major theories of probability, the logic of which is supposed to govern such inference. For the purposes of this paper (as of the general thesis, of which this paper is a special case), the most important part of the theories of probability consists of the definition of the central concept: the concept of probability. If and when we have this in hand, we can judge (as we shall, for the special case, in the final section of this paper) the adequacy of the attempts to construct a valid probability argument for the existence of the external world. Essentially, there are two theories of probability: the first (deriving in contemporary logic from H. Jeffreys, J. M. Keynes, and L. Wittgenstein), that probability is a logical relation, falling short of logical implication, between two sentences (premise and conclusion, or evidence and hypothesis); and the second (deriving from R. von Mises and H. Reichenbach), that probability is (the limit of) the relative frequency with which a certain property occurs in the elements of a certain class.

II

In a series of writings extending over the past nineteen years, Professor D. C. Williams has defended the validity of the inductive proof of the external world,[3] and sometimes has even

[3] "The A Priori Argument for Subjectivism," "The Inductive Argument for Subjectivism," "The Argument for Realism," *The Monist*, Vols. 43–44 (1933–34), pp. 172–202, 80–107, and 187–209, respectively; "Induction and

suggested the form which the argument might take. Induction being a species of probability argument, however, it was necessary, if the inductive argument was to be formulated with any kind of logical exactness, to construct first a theory of probability and then a theory of induction—something that remained to be accomplished during his extended defense of the inductive argument for realism. Both desiderata have since been satisfied,[4] and it therefore becomes possible, for the first time, to evaluate the argument with a degree of logical rigor formerly beyond us.

Professor Williams calls his hypothesis of the external world "metaphysical realism," and defines it as follows: "Realism is the metaphysical doctrine that conscious experience is continuous with or correlated with an area of being which has in common with the conscious content at least the fact that it *exists*, and almost certainly some characters in addition, but is not, in the absence of other evidence than the conscious character of the conscious content itself, to be ascribed *in toto* either the character of consciousness, or dependence upon that character."[5]

The most important point to be noted about Professor Williams's hypothesis is that it asserts the existence of unperceived or unexperienced entities; it asserts, in short, that the data of sense are not all there is. What is to be inferred by way of the logic of induction, given the data of sense as premise, is that there are unperceived or unexperienced entities. The problem for us, therefore, is whether there is a valid inductive argument for the existence of them.

The statistical (or the proportional) syllogism is, for Professor Williams, the paradigm of probability argument; to crude intuition, it most clearly exemplifies the logical relation of probability.[6] In abstract terms, the general formulation of the proportional syllogism is the following: if m/n M is P, and a is M, then there is a probability of m/n that a is P. Interpreting this

the External World," *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 5 (April 1938), pp. 181–188; *The Ground of Induction*, Harvard University Press, 1947, pp. 111, 166–8, 170–173, and 175–176.

[4] "On the Derivation of Probabilities From Frequencies," "The Challenging Situation in the Philosophy of Probability," "The Problem of Probability," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 5, No. 4, June 1945, pp. 449–481, Vol. 6, No. 1, Sept. 1945, pp. 67–86, and Vol. 6, No. 4, June 1946, pp. 619–622, respectively. In *The Ground of Induction*, cited above, he constructs his theory of induction, basing it on his theory of probability.

[5] "Induction and the External World," cited above, p. 187.

[6] For a more detailed and critical account of the theory, see the writer's "Probability: Inductive versus Deductive," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 3, June 1952, pp. 49–56.

formula in terms of the Laplacian classical theory of probability, he defines probability by reference to the relative truth-frequencies of two classes of propositions: "To say that a proposition has a probability of .75 is . . . to say that it is one of a definitely identified class of propositions among which 75 out of 100 are unqualifiedly true and 25 flatly false" (p. 47).[7]

One of the major problems allegedly involved in the general "problem of induction"—to turn to our last logical topic—is "the justification" of induction. For Professor Williams, this comes to the problem of demonstrating that induction is a logically valid form of argument; and this, in turn, amounts to showing that induction is a species of probability-argument—in other words, that induction is formulable in terms of the proportional syllogism. The "logical justification of induction," then, is most briefly formulable, in Professor Williams's own terms, as follows:

(1) "Any sample, a, which we may have drawn from a population is itself one of a large class, M, of samples, to wit, the multitude of groups or sets, each of the same size as a, which are included in the population; and among these, the overwhelming majority have the property (P) of matching the population.

(2) "Hence, by the proportional syllogism, it is overwhelmingly probable that the actual sample a is one of those which match (P), and hence it is probable that the sample matches *it*, that is, has approximately the same composition which we may now discern in the sample" (p. 93).[8]

[7] Henceforth, all references are to *The Ground of Induction*, and all page references will be carried in the body of the paper.

Concerning this definition of proability, two observations might be made in passing. (a) Probability so defined is indistinguishable from logical implication; the definition is therefore incompatible with the essential *relativity* of probability-arguments to the premises. I have argued this point at some length in the paper referred to in footnote 6. (b) If the probability-relation were identical with the implication-relation, then the existence of the external world could never be inferred by means of the logic of probability, for the assertion of the existence of the external world is logically distinct from the assertion of the premises (the data of sense).

[8] Similar formulations, verbally different but logically equivalent, of this logical justification of induction are to be found on pp. 21, 88, 90, 91, 97, and 201. The *detailed* construction of the alleged proof, utilizing certain statistical formulae, the calculus of probability, plus of course the proportional syllogism, is to be found in pp. 77–90, and summarized on p. 91. The succeeding pages of the chapter (IV: "The Probability of Induction") consists mainly of reviews of the underlying considerations, and re-assertions, etc. But the detailed proof has, I believe, no more logical content or force than the abbreviated formulation quoted above; and its complexity only obscures the fallacy committed in the inductive argument for the existence of the external world. Here, as through-

This alleged proof of the validity of induction admittedly depends fundamentally and unavoidably on the law of large numbers, a logically true law of mathematics, which says: "No matter what the size of the sample, more samples of that size must have (as nearly as possible) the same composition as the population than have any other composition" (p. 97). If, now, we apply the proportional syllogism, then by logical implication we obtain Professor Williams's conclusion: "Any population will probably and approximately match, in any statistical respect, any of its samples" (pp. 78–79).

The logical situation with respect to "deductive" probabilities (those exemplified by the proportional syllogism) is, according to Professor Williams, the reverse of that with respect to inductive ones. In the former, typically, we know the number and composition of the population, we want to infer the composition of the sample; and the inference proceeds validly via the proportional syllogism. In the latter, on the contrary, all we know is the number and the composition of the *sample*, and we want to infer the composition of the *population*. Since the inference obviously cannot proceed via the proportional syllogism alone, we must, according to Professor Williams, make the inference by way of two logical principles: first, the proportional syllogism; and second, the *a priori* law of large numbers. Thus, according to his account, the latter functions as an abstract general major premise for every particular inductive argument, and the former constitutes the logical form of it. Knowledge of the number and composition of the sample supplies the material minor premise, and the conclusion is derivable via the proportional syllogism.

III

What, to turn finally to evaluation of the validity of the inductive argument for the existence of the external world, is the logical fallacy in all this? To see what it is, we must recall just what, with respect to the problem of the external world, we are supposed to be able to prove. We are supposed to be able to prove, albeit inductively, that *there is* such a world, in other words, that *there is* a set of entities which are not data of sense. This, formulated in the terminology of Professor Williams's logic of induction, amounts to an inductive proof that *there is a population* (that is, in the relevant epistemological situation, *an external world*) which is larger than the *sample* (that is, in the relevant situation, *the data of sense*). Can Professor Williams provide, or even formulate, such an induc-

out this paper, limitations of space exclude the sort of detailed exposition and analysis required for exactness and fairness of representation.

tive proof, then, with the logical machinery made available by his theory of induction?

No, it is logically impossible, I think; for the logical machinery at his disposal can, at best, prove inductively *only* that, *if* there is, in fact, a population (in our problem, the external world) which is larger than the sample (in our problem, the data of sense), then necessarily its *composition* is probably similar to the composition of the sample.

But it is logically impossible for him to prove inductively (with high, low, or any degree of probability) that *there is* such a population. For, to repeat, the only available logical machinery with which to attempt to prove it consists of the two logical principles: the law of large numbers and the proportional syllogism. The proportional syllogism, as he admits, taken by itself is obviously inadequate, and so is the law of large numbers. But so, even if less obviously, is the combination of the two. For the law asserts, in its proper and only acceptable formulation, that *if there is* a population of any size whatsoever, *then* the majority of its samples of a certain size match the population composition-wise. But obviously, no logical law can by itself either assert categorically or establish the existence of an actual empirical population. Like the contemporary logical interpretation of universal generalizations as conditions, the law of large numbers must be interpreted as a conditional implication: for any population whatsoever, *if* anything *is* a population, *then* the vast majority of its samples must match it. But to assert anything about an actual empirical population requires a minor existential premise to the effect that the population exists.

In its most schematic form, Professor Williams's inductive argument for the existence of the external world must utilize the following logical principles and material premises:

(1) as data, the number and composition of the sample (the observed data);

(2) as logical principles: (a) the law of large numbers: most of the samples of a given population match the population composition-wise; and (b) the proportional syllogism: if most of the members of a given population have a certain property, then it is probable, approximately to the degree given by the ratio stated in the major premise, that some predesignated member of the population has the property.

The inductive argument for the existence of the external world is then itself formulable schematically as follows: *If* we have a population (larger than the sample), *then*, since (2, a) is logically true

and (2, b) is assumed to be a valid form of argument, any sample of that population will probably match the population in any specified respect, and hence—since this is logically equivalent—the population will probably match the sample. Since we know (1) by empirical observation, we know the probable composition of the population.[9]

So stated, the inductive argument for the existence of the external world is thus seen to require the assumption of the very point which it is supposed to prove: the existence of the population, which is, to the extent that it is larger than the sample, just the external world. Stated in terms of Professor Williams's logic of induction, the problem of the existence of the external world amounts to the problem of the existence of a population (in so far as it is larger than the sample); and the crucial point of this critique is that, when the logic of induction is so set up that it requires, as a general major premise in every inductive argument, the law of large numbers, that logic also requires the assumption of the existence of a population. Since the law of large numbers, being a purely logical law, cannot categorically assert, or by its own force establish, the existence of the population, the whole inductive argument for the existence of the external world becomes a conditional or hypothetical argument, and thus becomes logically incapable of establishing the existence of the external world. This consequence is the price paid, I believe, for Professor Williams's fundamental adherence to the classical theory of probability, for regarding the proportional syllogism as the principle of every probability argument, and for the attempt, finally, to transform every inductive argument, including the one at issue, into a proportional syllogism of the second level.

GEORGE CHATALIAN

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

ON APPEARING JUST AND BEING UNJUST

> Though all things foul would wear the brows of
> grace yet grace must still look so.
>
> *Macbeth*

FOR some years I have asked students their opinion of Glaucon's argument in Plato's *Republic* that the ideal life would be to enjoy the reputation of justice but to be really unjust. In particular I have been interested in their reactions to the myth of the

[9] The inductive argument, in this form, is not, to my knowledge, to be found in any of the writings of Professor Williams. I had to construct it, since I could not find it; but it is, I believe, in strict accordance with the principles of his inductive logic. No other is possible, I think.

ring of Gyges. Do they think it is true that if a conventionally good man were freed from the fear of punishment, his conduct would degenerate and become indistinguishable from that of a reprobate?

The most common answer I get is similar to A. E. Taylor's observation that "there is no human virtue which would not be deteriorated by immunity from detection. . . . We are all prone to lower our standard when we believe there is no eye, human or divine, upon us. . . . This is the real fact which gives the sting to the imaginative fiction about the ring of Gyges."[1] This type of reaction represents what might be called a middle-of-the-road sort of thinking. At one extreme a minority belligerently maintain that Glaucon scores his point completely: that no one would pursue justice if he could be sure of escaping the penalties of doing injustice. A smaller minority at the other extreme optimistically contend that the "really just" man would continue in his upright ways even if he knew he could get away with injustice: habit as well as conscience would keep him in the straight and narrow path.

Turning to what professional philosophers have written concerning the arguments of Glaucon, I have been surprised to discover an almost complete absence of comment. At the risk of repeating what already may have been said by others who have escaped my notice, I will venture some remarks of my own on these famous arguments.

It seems not to have been noted that the assumption underlying Glaucon's discourse is the meaningful possibility of separating what merely "appears" just or unjust from what "really is" just or unjust. Of course it is true that specific cases are sometimes encountered where an apparent or reputed moral quality is subsequently discovered to be ethically opposite to the actual inner quality that was really present. For example, some seeming altruism may arise from unaltruistic motives. On the other hand, distressing and even offensive behavior may represent the miscarriage of highly laudable intentions. These are the familiar facts which give point to the separation of ethical appearance from ethical reality. But the separation is possible only because it is an exception to the prevailing situation in which being is inseparable from seeming.

The trouble with Glaucon's argument is that he assumes the meaningfulness of a separation in principle, a separation system-

[1] A. E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and His Work*, 2nd ed., New York 1927, p. 270.

atically concealed from everyone except the narrators and readers of the *Republic*. But what would it mean to be "really just" when such justice is required never to appear? Again, what would it mean to "appear unjust" if in principle such appearance so completely misrepresents the reality as to be indistinguishable from it? No meaning can be attached to the notion of "being just" in the absence of the public disclosure connoted by the idea of "appearing just." Appearance is the necessary condition of there being effects imputable to a moral agent. When separated from appearance morality is separated from action, and this is a contradiction. To be moral is not only to disclose oneself in action, but it is also the willingness, even the resolve, to make that disclosure. To be "really just" is to submit that reality to the judgment that is based on appearance. There is no morality until the inner attempts to realize itself in the outer world. A wholly internal and private moral quality is thus incapable of being defined or experienced.

What has been said does not imply that moral reputations are always correctly ascribed, but rather that morality has no meaning apart from ascription, correct or incorrect. Unless a person's moral nature can be presented, it can scarcely be misrepresented. When there is "no eye . . . upon us," it is as false to say that we "lower our standard[s]" as it is to say either that we keep them at the same level or that we abandon them altogether. In the absence of the witnessing eye, there are no standards either to safeguard or to lose.

There is still another way in which Glaucon's position is self-defeating. In separating ethical appearance from ethical reality, he destroys the ground of the very fact he adduces to prove that the life of the really unjust man who appears just would be preferable to that of the really just man with a reputation for injustice. The fact he relies upon is that society extols the appearance of justice. But this fact is a conditional one: as soon as suspicion mounts that outer appearance belies the inner reality, society's praise changes to blame. If there could be a concern for the appearance of justice independent of its fidelity to inner fact, it is quite incredible that the majority of mankind would bestow praise upon such appearance. Selling paste diamonds wouldn't be profitable unless real diamonds existed and could be identified by at least some properties incapable of simulation and desirable for their own sake. It is noteworthy in ordinary experience that when the jewel of virtue is discovered to be bogus, its continued appearance no longer evokes our admiration. In adducing reference to counterfeit appearances, Glaucon unwittingly

underwrites a type of situation which precludes a systematic separation of appearance from reality. False appearances presuppose that what is true becomes identified in the region of appearance.

II

The present analysis may be developed further by dwelling on the difficulty involved in Glaucon's assumption that in the absence of all restraint and magically removed from the possibility of being punished for acts of injustice, a person could be said to have acted either justly or unjustly. The Gyges story mistakenly assumes that an act could be denoted just or unjust apart from effects which retroact upon the agent. But unless a man can be punished, there is no way of knowing that his deed is unjust. Since this contention is a radical one and, I believe, determinative in connection with broad philosophical alignments, it requires justification.

Moral wrongdoing presupposes the possibility of punishment and the willingness to inflict it. Although specific crimes occur before specific acts of punishment, the only evidence that what has occurred is a crime lies in the reaction which its enactment will produce. Unless an act alleged to be criminal evokes retaliation, its status as crime is open to doubt. A simple illustration of this is the status of Blue Laws still on statute books which are no longer enforced and which no one intends to enforce. In the absence of penal retribution, infractions are nominal and not real. The readiness to punish is the only concrete evidence that wrongdoing has occurred because, among the effects produced by an act, this is required in order to acknowledge the presence of a human evildoer. Failure to punish an act productive of undesired or painful consequences means either that we deny moral responsibility to its source or that the deplored effects constitute no threat to the order of the community to which the agent belongs. Until alleged misdeeds call forth the retributive reaction of those whom such deeds affect, no ethical status can be assigned to them.

Beginning with Plato traditional ethical views have usually sought meaning for ethical predicates in some manner other than what is here proposed. It has been held that approval of God, sanction of conscience, conformity with nature, or capacity to produce happiness or self-realization establishes the moral attributes of actions. Favorable and unfavorable social reactions have been regarded as subsequent events directed toward moral essences already defined and embodied. By contrast, it is here maintained that these reactions themselves define and control such essences. The position closest to that here adopted is the familiar Social

Approval theory. But traditional proponents of this theory (e.g., Hume and Westermarck) stress passively experienced emotions and sentiments of favor and disfavor. The present view emphasizes active responses. If stress has been put on the negative reaction of those whom action affects, the intention has been deliberate. Both in the life of the individual and in the lives of societies the origin of ethical ideas occurs as some form of intolerance. Something is not to be put up with. What is not to be tolerated makes its appearance as a threat to some already existing order or organization. Prior to the appearance and rejection of some menace, the order which is threatened is neither good nor evil because it is not self-consciously moral. It stands for nothing but the status quo of unreflective habit. It is neither chosen nor willed. Only through some spontaneous and forceful rejection of what it autonomously declares to be a threat to its own integrity does any human agency create the meaning as well as the actuality of wrongdoing.

The antithesis of this view is more familiar and congenial. Stemming from Plato, a long tradition of will-less rationalism has assumed that systematic types of order can be apprehended and defined prior to the occurrence and identification of threat. Although the present discussion is focused on the ethical order, it may reinforce what has been said to call attention to the similarity of situation with regard to other systematic types of order. Just as in ethics no moral predicate can be assigned prior to the rejection of some threat, so also in logic, the discovery of the order of valid inference presupposes the occurrence of what gets rejected as fallacy. It is no accident that the formulation of Aristotle's logic grew out of his reaction to and analysis of the mis-reasonings of the Sophists. And just as both ethical and logical order depend upon the identification and rejection of defections, so it is in every systematically ordered region of human experience. Apart from miscalculation, no mathematics; apart from misspeaking, no grammar; apart from misgoverning, no politics. Wherever and whenever any type of order gains acknowledgment and comes to serve as the conscious locus of standards and norms, such order makes its appearance in connection with the assertion of a standpoint of criticism in the face of that which if persisted in would lead to a breakdown of order and control. We are, therefore, unable to bring any form of lawfulness into our thought and experience except by way of some error, threat, or defection. It is as a specific case of this general contention that I would again urge the claim that the ethical order and hence the meaningfulness of

both justice and injustice rest upon that act of assertion and recovery which is both the occasion and meaning of punishment.

To the objection that there must already exist a positive rule before one can speak of such a thing as fault or defect, I can only say that the position here taken is committed to the view that error is absolute. In the beginning there is the mistake. This alone has no environment. Elaboration of this claim as a fundamental metaphysical principle lies beyond the scope of the present article. However, the implications of its denial are not only well known in general, but they constitute the basis of Plato's failure to give satisfactory answer to Glaucon's arguments in the *Republic*. To this we may now turn.

III

That justice is preferable to injustice whether seen or unseen by gods and men renders insoluble the mystery that there are unjust men. It helps not at all to say that this is only because men are ignorant of the true good. For how comes it about that there is ignorance? By elaborating a story of Reality and the Good which does not itself suggest the necessity of ignorance, defect, and limitation, Platonic metaphysics makes ethics a mystery in the course of its attempt to provide a basis for ethics. This is a persistent problem that attends every philosophy that identifies Being with Perfection. A noteworthy feature of the *Republic* is the clarity with which the uncertain status of the non-ideal is everywhere apparent. Whence the Fall, since no account of what Really Is can explain it? Even if ignorance can be removed, it is still strange to speak of preferring justice as if the distance still separating man from the ideal were somehow definitive of the human situation.[2] There is always the irreconcilability of saying on the one hand that it is the soul's true nature to be attracted by the Good, and on the other hand that it is capable of being deceived by the power of appearance. Reconciliation would be effected if the situation in which being deceived is possible were itself taken to be absolute. But this would be the abandonment of Platonism. It is because ignorance, limitation, and defect occupy no necessary place in the scheme of that which Really Is that Plato consigns them to a separate region of mere appearance. This separation, as we have noted its occurrence in the *Republic*, is as fatal to the success of Plato's own thought as it is to the position represented by Glaucon.

[2] In the *Symposium* Plato himself approximates just such a position, but it is significant that this occurs in that part of Diotima's discourse which is described as having to do with the *lesser* mysteries of Love.

In his concern to show that men have a stake in the reality of the just life and not merely in the reputation for justice, Plato goes too far when he is willing to argue that the outer appearance of justice may be disregarded in establishing what it means to be "really just." In accepting the two statues which Glaucon has been polishing up for the argument to decide between,[3] Socrates has let himself in for a hopeless undertaking. For it is here that Plato jettisons the region of appearance, and this is the only region in which justice can receive definition because, as we have shown, it is the only place where men's actions are witnessed and reacted to by other men. Nowhere in the *Republic* do any of its citizens have to do anything in order to be just. As reflected in the souls of those who have overcome ignorance in the course toward true wisdom, justice is an internal condition which does not require, since it does not arise from, any finite act.

One further consequence of the separation of the reality of justice from its appearance is the lurking suspicion among readers of the *Republic* that Plato makes good on the intrinsic preferability of the just life only by falling back on the homely observation that the presence of injustice in the soul renders a man wretchedly unhappy. It is this which seems to be the clinching point of the argument rather than that the well-ordered soul reflects the ideal pattern of Being. This tacit acknowledgment of the relevance of hedonic consequences illustrates a tendency in Plato's thought at variance with that which traditional Platonism has followed. It is a tendency which gives central importance to the region of appearance where there are eyes both human and divine upon the acts of men. It may be seen in Socrates' unwillingness to assign the highest status to the just life which remains merely private and inner. One who has attained such inner virtue has done "a great work—yes; but not the greatest, unless he find a State suitable to him; for in a State which is suitable to him, he will have a larger growth and be the saviour of his country, as well as of himself."[4] Again in this connection it is noteworthy that following immediately upon Socrates' acceptance of the challenge to show that justice is better than injustice "seen or unseen by gods and men," the argument turns to a search for justice in the State where "the quantity of justice is likely to be larger and more easily discernible."[5]

If Plato had been more faithful to the world of appearance,

[3] Cf. *Republic* 361, where the "entirely unjust" man is "to be deemed just," and "the best of men" is to be "thought the worst."

[4] Ibid., 497A.

[5] Ibid., 368E.

he might not have had such trouble in dealing with Glaucon's argument that men care for the appearance of justice rather than its reality. But Glaucon, as we know, is only a spokesman for a strain in Plato's own thought, a valence of which he felt the full force but whose challenge he was never wholly able to meet. So great is the power of appearance.

Are we, then, in conclusion, to say no good word for Plato's ideal of an unseen justice in the soul that may lie beyond the ken of gods and men? The strong persistence of this conception of a goodness that escapes all witnesses suggests that it reflects some aspect of truth. There is, I believe, considerable propriety in the feeling that unless human virtue go, at least in part, unrecognized, there is no real virtue at all. Plato did see that in smooth conformity and acceptance, the moral will could claim no reality since it would possess neither originality nor capacity to criticize. And so he quite properly rejected surface convention and outer appearance where these connoted merely artful conformity. But where there is originality and criticism, there also one will find risk. The essence of morality is lost unless the good man is willing to sign up for a situation in which, being "really just," he may have to suffer the reputation of injustice. One of the deadliest assumptions of moral theory is that virtue brings moral safety and that private virtue necessarily makes for a secure and comfortable status quo. Whether conceptions of this sort can be ascribed to Plato's thinking in the *Republic* is doubtful. However, they seem not wholly out of keeping with the character of the man who made three trips to Sicily and who nearly lost his life in the task of attempting to revolutionize the life of the royal court at Syracuse. But this is another theme and would have to await both a different occasion and another writer.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Experiments in Living; a Study of the Nature and Foundation of Ethics or Morals in the Light of Recent Work in Social Anthropology. The Gifford Lectures for 1948–1949 delivered in the University of St. Andrews. A. MACBEATH. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1952. xi, 462 pp. $5.50.

It is a distressing fact that most of contemporary ethical theory confines its discussions to moral situations arising within our own Western culture, and even sometimes restricts itself to analysing

or justifying the mores of the English gentleman or his language. Our provincialism is made evident by the deliberate or supercilious disregard of moral systems diverging from our own. There is an occasional sally into the world of anthropology for the purpose of finding or even fabricating (e.g., Hobbes and Locke) evidence to prove a pet theory. It seems an obvious truism that any adequate ethical theory must be able to give a satisfactory account of moral judgments differing from our own, and it must pay more attention than has yet been given to the evidence that modern anthropology offers us about the nature of man and of his moral discourse.

We should therefore welcome this almost unique book, which is "a study of the nature and foundation of ethics or morals in the light of recent work in Social Anthropology." The position that the author seeks to establish, he frankly and charmingly admits, is "old-fashioned" nowadays, namely, self-realizationism. However, this is an old theory in a new dress—experimental rather than aprioristic. A large part of the book is devoted to a detailed discussion of the moral ideas of four primitive peoples, namely, the Trobriand Islanders, the Tonga tribe (Bantu), the Australian Aborigines, and the Crow Indians. The author's reading is extensive and the references to anthropological literature are voluminous. He has relied upon such distinguished authorities as Malinowski, Junod, Radcliffe-Brown, Lowie, and many others.

The new version of self-realization is based upon the distinction between formal and operative ideals. The formal ideal is the purely formal (empty) structure of moral consciousness: "the objective counterpart of the unity of a self which is self-conscious and social." It demands consistency and comprehensiveness, adequacy to raw human nature and its needs. The operative ideals are "the detailed forms of life in which different peoples have tried, more or less successfully, to articulate its requirements. . . . [They] are attempts, only partially successful, to give concrete expression to the requirements of the [formal ideal]" (p. 55). They are "experiments in living." The rightness of moral rules and ends "are explicable by and derive their authority from, the way of life of the people concerned" (p. 370).

This distinction enables Mr. MacBeath to avoid the bogey of relativism and still admit the significance of diverse moralities. The formal ideal (and raw human nature with its needs) is universally the same for all men, but the operative ideal varies from society to society. Correspondingly, moral *goodness* is measured by the operative ideal and hence is relative to a society, whereas moral *enlightenment* applies to the operative ideals and is judged

in terms of the formal ideal. Thus among the Crow Indians being a brave warrior may reflect moral goodness, but not enlightenment.

The two modern ethical theories mentioned in the book, Intuitionism and Ideal Utilitarianism, are attacked on anthropological grounds. Of "self-evident intuitions" it is shown that primitive people "understand the concepts used in them and have sufficiently attended to them to recognize them as self-evident, if they are in fact self-evident. They have satisfied the two conditions usually regarded as necessary and sufficient for such recognition" (p. 357). The primitive moralist neither recognizes all the rules we do, nor does he consider those which he does to be universally applicable. The assumption that they are "deficient in moral sense or moral reason" is shown to be fortuitous. I think that this neatly and finally disposes of intuitionism. However, this does not prove that moral rules are never regarded by primitives as "containing the grounds of rightness within themselves." This might be more questionable. It is, of course, difficult to investigate these issues from secondary sources. At least one philosophical investigator has concluded that one primitive tribe does regard certain of their rules (e.g., incest) as "self-authenticating," i.e., a "formalistic rule."[1]

The basic criticism of Intuitionism and Ideal Utilitarianism is that they isolate rules and ends from their context in the "pattern of culture," i.e., the pattern of interlocking institutions. An incest rule, for example, can only be understood in terms of the conception of family, economic institutions, etc., peculiar to the society. The mistake of abstracting from the context is called the *method of isolation*. This method is characteristic of mathematics as contrasted with the natural sciences. Moral reasoning should take the latter rather than the former for its model. It is experimental and fallible.

To an American reader, the similarity of Mr. MacBeath's views to those of Dewey is striking. Although there is no reference to Dewey, we find in this book the same emphasis on experimentation, on the context of conditions and consequences, on human needs and their interaction in social institutions, on the continuum of ends and means, and the same sort of attack on isolated rules and ends ("fixed ends"). In fact, it is difficult to find crucial differences except in language. In comparison with Dewey, Mr. MacBeath writes more clearly and precisely and presents more con-

[1] This is one of the conclusions reached by Professor Richard Brandt from his interviews with the Hopi Indians, soon to be published. My own feeling is that perhaps the story is more complicated, since it involves complex issues of definition and interviewing techniques.

crete facts to substantiate his conclusions, but perhaps his treatment is not quite as subtle.

It seems unfortunate that Mr. MacBeath did not have time to consider the so-called "naturalistic" position in ethics, since his approach resembles it so closely. An examination of the relationships between ideals and interests, and of the modes of their integration as it is undertaken by Dewey, Perry, and others, might have illuminated some of the points left vague by Mr. MacBeath. The only American naturalist cited is F. C. Sharp, who is spoken of with approval.

The part of the book which interested me most was the anthropological section. There is no doubt that anthropology, despite its tremendous advances, has not yet been able to give a satisfactory description of the ethics of primitive societies. Anthropologists in their writings frequently confuse the causes and functions of a moral rule with the grounds of its supposed rightness and the grounds for believing in its rightness. Mr. MacBeath is concerned to observe these distinctions in his study.

In accordance with the findings of modern anthropology, Mr. MacBeath maintains that many primitive people do not ground their moral rules in their religious beliefs, nor do they ground them in the authority of custom. Morality is autonomous. A great deal is made of the separation of the rules of secular morality from religious practices and taboos. "We are assured (by Malinowski) that the native never confuses the two" (p. 323). Magico-religious rules are accepted on authority, whereas moral rules are understood to be the conditions of individual and social well-being. I am inclined to believe that this distinction is not always as easy to make as Mr. MacBeath supposes, especially if it be formulated in terms of supernatural and social sanctions. My own brief field work with the Navaho Indians may illustrate this point. The Navaho believes that if you look at your mother-in-law you will go blind. Such blindness is regarded as a natural and inevitable consequence of the act, as putting your hand in a fire will result in its being burned. Is mother-in-law avoidance a taboo or a moral rule? But the Navaho also thinks that if certain parts of their ritual ceremonies are performed incorrectly, sickness is the inevitable result. Is this supernatural? Furthermore, the Navaho believes that the natural and inevitable consequence of treating others harshly will be that they treat you harshly in return. It seems difficult, at least in the case of the Navahos, to distinguish between social sanctions and natural or supernatural ones. The point is that for these people reality is all of one piece, and the consequences

of any event are determined in a mechanistic order.[2] Magico-religious rules and rules of expediency all merge together with moral rules.

It seems therefore that some clear-cut differentia of a moral as distinct from a non-moral rule is required. Primitive categories are so entirely different from our own that the task becomes extremely difficult. We cannot employ our own intuitive notion of what such a rule would be, nor can we rely on the accounts in English since the interpreter or translator tends to use the English words that come most easily, e.g., "good," "bad," "right," and "wrong." We must also avoid a definition in terms of "rules promoting the common good," for this would make the argument circular. At this point, I think that suggestions made in recent writings of the emotivists and the new analysts may be be relevant. The question must be answered in terms of the uses of moral discourse and the reasoning occurring in it.[3]

I believe that Mr. MacBeath, despite all the precautions he takes, has been misled by his authorities into accepting too readily Malinowski's conclusion that moral rules ("laws") are obeyed because of the "principle of reciprocity" and a sense of the common good of family or tribe. These phrases may describe the *functions* of the rules, and their long-range persistence or decay, but I have my doubts whether they are really always regarded as *grounds* of obedience. If I may be allowed to refer to the Navahos again, these people *never* appeal to the rights of others or to the common good to justify their moral rules.[4] I can hardly believe that the Navahos are unique in this respect. It seems more plausible to suppose that Malinowski and the other authorities cited were using their own explanation instead of presenting the justifications considered binding by their informants. This is one of the difficulties which lie in having to base one's conclusions on second-hand accounts of primitive peoples. The new practice, which is now be-

[2] In fact, the "supernatural beings," the Holy People, are usually as much subject to these laws of reality as are ordinary mortal human beings.

[3] Of course, because of the insuperable linguistic barriers in anthropological field work, the tendency to look at everything *sub specie verborum* will not help us. But I believe that many worthwhile conclusions can be extracted from the writings of such authors as Stevenson, Toulmin, etc.

[4] The Navaho would never argue that you ought not to kill or lie because it would harm *us*, e.g., the family or group. Instead he would say: "You ought not to lie, because otherwise people won't like *you*." Professor Clyde Kluckhohn has confirmed this to me in private conversation. In *effect*, of course, the rule will result in common good, and the Navaho believes that the good of the group is a necessary condition of his own good. However, the common good is always considered a means rather than an end-in-itself.

coming accepted by anthropologists, of providing a verbatim record of interviews with informants should help to remedy this situation. But there is still a definite place for philosophically trained interviewers to do field work on these more subtle issues.

In conclusion, I should like to say that I found in *Experiments in Living* an interesting and refreshing approach to the vital problems of normative ethics, which is too sadly neglected by most moral philosophers today.

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Oswald Spengler; a Critical Estimate. H. STUART HUGHES. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952. ix, 176 p. (Twentieth Century Library.) $2.00.

This is a highly condensed and compact little volume which not only gives a short summary of Spengler's works but describes their setting and evaluates their influence. In addition there are a number of biographical references that will be of considerable interest to the reader who wants to know more of the brooding mind behind *The Decline of the West.*

The first four chapters consist of a highly competent description of the intellectual and political climate into which the *Decline* was thrust. One chapter is devoted to a detailed account of Spengler's major work and one chapter to an account of his other political writings, but four chapters are concerned with his subsequent influence. The reader who is searching for a point by point analysis of the *Decline* will necessarily look elsewhere, for this volume is not primarily an analysis but an estimate.

After surveying the subsequent commentaries on the *Decline,* the author concludes that Spengler's work was almost universally condemned by the students of the respective fields from which he drew. Nevertheless, the work sold widely and its vocabulary crept surreptitiously into even the most learned treatises. It is something of this latter phenomenon that Hughes wishes to explain. The breadth and complexity of the *Decline,* to say nothing of its inward contradictions, offered ample opportunity for the meeting of such diverse groups as the art historian on the one hand and the National Socialist on the other. Practically all interests were served and, although the reader who persevered to the end might lay it down with a certain heaviness of heart, he would be quite unimaginative if he had not gained from it another argument for his own particular viewpoint. No one critic could fell the forest and to the lay reader they seemed petty and pedantic, laboring

at first one tree and then another—also, perhaps the forest would continue without the trees.

Spengler's other political works could not hope to live up to the expectations of his followers, partly because they dealt with particulars in the history of his day and partly because it is difficult for even a self-acclaimed genius to play god twice in a lifetime (cf. pp. 68 and 114).

The ambiguous relationship which Spengler bore to the National Socialist Party is traced by Hughes through a comparison of their respective theories and by noting the actual renunciation of Spengler by the Nazis. "It was no democratic or liberal principle that prevented Spengler from being a good fascist; it was a combination of personal fastidiousness and political illusion." That Spengler cannot be called a Nazi should be of considerable relief to his devotees; also, it further narrows the denotation of the term.

According to Hughes, "The New Spenglerians" are Toynbee, Kroeber, and Sorokin. It is within this chapter that the author's own criterion is made explicit. Kroeber and Sorokin, both of whom have been influenced to some degree by Spengler, are under the impression that they have improved upon the cyclic school by trying to be objective and scientific. Toynbee, who was more of a contemporary than a follower of Spengler, would have come to essentially the same opinion if it were not for his dogmatic religious optimism which flies in the face of the historical data. The idealists, Hughes states, "arrive at the crux of the whole issue" when they say that history is a subjective matter (p. 157). Kroeber and Sorokin are misleading no one more than themselves in claiming objectivity; no cyclic scheme can be objective, scientific, or pragmatic. The essence of such schemes must consist of intuitive knowledge, somehow fruitful but not necessarily accurate.

Hughes concludes that Spengler made no significant contribution to metaphysics in particular or philosophy in general, nor to the fields of anthropology, economics, or politics. He is to be judged, not from the viewpoint of one or more of these fields nor by any scientific criteria whatsoever, but solely from the viewpoint of literature as a man who made "prophecies of varying degrees of discernment." Significantly, he adds, "true or false, such creations as these have permanently enriched our understanding of our past and of our future" (p. 163). Our understanding has been so enriched by Spengler that "*The Decline of the West* offers the nearest thing we have to a key to our times" (p. 165).

Thus Hughes accepts Spengler's theory of truth and Spengler's estimate of himself as a near genius with a capacity for rare in-

sight that "enriches the understanding." Descriptive data may be either true or false but insights can only be enriching; the "key," "core," or "essence" of any system can be neither disproved in fact (p. 72) nor proved harmful in effect. This is a criterion without a negative and consequently it follows that Spengler (or anyone else who has had similar insights) made a contribution. Presumably the author would wish to be judged by the same criterion, so it also follows that his conclusions, as insights, have made a contribution to the Spenglerian lore.

It would seem to this reviewer that any criterion or estimate which can be termed critical must provide for a negative that can be measured, not in some indeterminate eternity but within time, and judged either true or false, enlightening or unenlightening, enriching or impoverishing. There is little question but what Spengler thought he was making statements about a determinate future, and certainly his followers thought so. Even as literature it must stand or fall by a literary criterion and so far few German or English departments have chosen it as an instance of exemplary style. Perhaps a full and positive appreciation of Spengler's works awaits the creation of a school of literary historians who by virtue of their mystical synthesis find that they really care for neither.

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A History of Ancient & Medieval Philosophy. Frederick Mayer. New York: American Book Company [1950]. xii, 546 pp. $5.00.

A History of Modern Philosophy. Frederick Mayer. New York: American Book Company [1951]. xii, 657 pp. $5.25.

The wisdom and the visions of philosophy are perennial,—otherwise they would not have endured; and yet it is obvious that philosophy too is time-begotten and that its visions have a name and must have had, in their genesis, a local habitation. There is no contradiction here, but how exactly is this relationship to be managed in writing a history of philosophy?

The question gains in importance as one envisages a history of philosophy for present-day American students with a minimum of knowledge in both history and philosophy. Professor Mayer has come to grips with the problem and has produced two volumes which are comprehensive, reliable, and yet accessible to the student. Professor Mayer stresses "the reciprocal relationship existing between philosophy and civilization," but he does not dissolve phi-

losophy *in* civilization, does not disregard the specific and systematic content of philosophy. The relationship is not an "external" but an "internal" one, and the social dimension is neither isolated nor made out to be a dominant and determining factor; it is apprehended as a pervasive quality of philosophical experience as it is of all experience.

The first volume deals with ancient and medieval philosophy. Its initial chapter attempts to define "the Greek spirit" and to delineate the contours of its environment. Professor Mayer departs from the usual pattern and includes chapters on "The Roman Spirit of Philosophy," on Philo, on Arabic and Jewish philosophy. In his treatment of the major philosophers and themes his approach is "contemporary"—that is, he discloses their abiding insights by exploring their meaning for our own day. He does not entirely escape the "idolatry" of the present, and is inclined occasionally to accept what might be called a "cataclysmic" view of the history of philosophy, as when he informs us at the beginning of the second volume that "the story of modern philosophy is a story of successive rebellions." This is at best a half-truth, and luckily is not carried through in Professor Mayer's actual discussion of "modern philosophy."

The second volume includes—apart from chapters on the major figures—such chapters as "The Protestant Revolt," "The Enlightenment," "Early American Philosophy," "The Impact of Marx," "Kierkegaard," and goes on to "Twentieth-Century Tendencies." Like the first volume, it too contains brief biographies, short descriptions of the works of the philosophers and of works on them, and excellent lists of questions at the end of each chapter.

It is hardly possible in a brief review of two large volumes to note even in scantiest detail the author's interpretation of individual philosophers. The main fault (if such it be) with this history is that "the bride's too beautiful"—there is in it too great an abundance of material (the lives and doctrines of the philosophers, judicious excerpts from their writings, sketches of the social and cultural environment, appraisals of thinkers and estimates of their subsequent influence). But this material is dealt with skillfully and there is an architectonic aspect to the work. The teacher and student will be able to select that which may prove pertinent to their own special enterprise.

In a large-scale history of this sort some dubious statements are inevitable, and if several are mentioned here, it is in the conviction that as new editions are published the author will make

changes wherever he deems it necessary. Is it really true that Dante's Beatrice is an "allegorical Platonic abstraction"? (That was Father Mandonnet's view and it is cogently repudiated by Gilson in his recent book, *Dante the Philosopher*.) Is it advisable to refer to More's ideal state as "to some extent a communist society"? (With the current confusions regarding the term, might it not be better to speak of it as "communalistic"? And besides, even in the language of orthodox Marxism, communism is conceivable only in a technological, highly industrialized economy.) Since Santayana denies it, what warrant is there for the assertion that "in his old age he has become more interested in the problem of the Gospels and has more faith in the Christian tradition"? (Santayana's "faith" is so different—as is Dewey's—from what the word is ordinarily taken to signify, that clarification is surely required.) Is it sufficient to say that for Dewey "art is not an end in itself"? (Dewey's recognition of the *consummatory* value of esthetic experience is central in his philosophy of art and lights up his "instrumentalism" and helps to reveal it for what it truly is.)

These slips, and similar ones, are slight and do not impair the genuine validity of Professor Mayer's history. It is inclusive, scholarly, and a delight to read. Teachers of the history of philosophy will discover many uses for it, and will be grateful to him.

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Il problema della ragione. ANDREA VASA. Milano: Bocca, 1951. 194 pp. Lire 500.

This book is very obscure because vocabulary and grammar are both bad to the verge of illiteracy, and the author forgets that a thinker should aim always at the utmost perspicuity of expression because his subject-matter is already difficult in itself. This is the more deplorable as Mr. Vasa is thinking in earnest, and has something interesting to tell. Roughly speaking his position could be described as post-existentialism. He starts from Heidegger (not the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit* but the better Heidegger of *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*) to return by a devious path to Kierkegaard "in reverse," if this expression may be permitted. Mr. Vasa's final conclusion is that philosophy by its very incompleteness demands religion as a possible horizon of thought beyond thought, and this is a good point indeed against the Marxist's existentialism.

But Mr. Vasa avoids the mystical jargon of the existentialist

and puts his problem in classical terms as the problem of "practical" against "speculative" reason, seen in the light of a rather clever interpretation of the history of philosophy. Speculative reason implies the existence of some ultimate being to be known and this is true of realism as well as of any form of idealism or logico-transcendental epistemology. On the other hand Aristotle already averred that rational exploration of being is due to "curiosity," to some *practical* bent or quality of reason itself. Now the assumption of an "absolute" reality to be known by speculative reason, is inconsistent with that basic practical quality of limitless "curiosity" which is implied by the very existence of a speculative activity. This is a simplification of Mr. Vasa's point of view which is applied to the several stages of philosophical thought with interesting results. For instance, Mr. Vasa is able to see a more intimate correlation between radical (and logical) empiricism and pragmatism as lineal heirs to Locke's uncompromising realism. Mr. Vasa formulates in a new way Kant's logico-transcendental contrast of speculative and practical reason as derived from the third Critique's contrast of determinant and reflective judgment. Mr. Vasa's conception of Hegel's dialectics and his observations on the tension between being and nothing are really illuminating. The final result is that a *positive* value of philosophical thought can not be enforced within the limits of reason itself which must affirm and deny at the same time the existence of some absolute being. If we assume this quandary as fundamental to man as a rational being, the ultimate horizon of rational effort is displaced *beyond* reason. The contrast of speculative and practical reason remains but is justified by an Absolute beyond rationally assumed or discovered "reality."

A weakness of Mr. Vasa's position may be found in his rather superficial conception of logic as inherent to reason, or a form of thought—a conception which does not take into account the possibility of a pure (non-epistemological or non-applied) logic which is quite different from the conceptions of formal logic, and of transcendental and dialectical logic.

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